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Paying for College Financial Aid, Admission Workshop Slated for IWU, Feb. 18

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Illinois Wesleyan University will be among 52 sites statewide this month, where parents and their children who are high school seniors can receive free assistance in making college plans, focusing on admission and financial aid.

IWU will host a workshop on how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on Feb. 18 (Sunday) from 1 p.m.-3 p.m. in the Center for Natural Sciences, 201 E. Beecher St., Bloomington.

For the 12th consecutive year in Illinois, February has been earmarked as Financial Aid/Admission Awareness Month (FAAM). Students and their families statewide will take advantage of services through numerous free, public service FAAM activities.

Students enrolling for the 2001-02 academic year are closing in on their selection of a college and soon will begin the financial-aid process. Students and their parents needing help in understanding or completing the FAFSA will have the opportunity for individual assistance from financial-aid professionals at the IWU workshop.

The U.S. Department of Education provides the FAFSA, free-of-charge, on the Internet at www.fafsa.ed.gov, as well as paper copies of the form to high schools, colleges, and libraries.

Completing the FAFSA accurately and on time is the first and most important step to obtaining state and federal financial aid.

FAFSA workshops will be held statewide throughout February.

Those attending FAFSA workshops--including the one slated for IWU--should bring all completed or estimated 2000 income-tax forms, as well as any other asset information in order to complete the 2001-02 FAFSA.

To expedite the electronic-filing process, families should complete as much of the FAFSA as possible, in advance of the workshop.

Families attending the IWU or any other FAFSA workshop are encouraged to bring these items in addition to completed or estimated 2000 tax information:

- Student driver's license and Social Security card,
- Records of untaxed income (welfare, Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or veteran benefits);
- Current bank statements;

- Current mortgage information for properties other than the family's principal residence;
- Records of businesses, farm (if not the family's principal place of residence) and assets (stocks, bonds, and other investments).

Workshop participants are encouraged to bring hand-held calculators.

Families attending these workshops will receive information on many hot topics, including: electronic filing of the FAFSA; changes to the 2001-02 FAFSA; early awareness issues such as academic preparation and planning for college costs; College Illinois!, the state's prepaid tuition program; and general information about federal tax credits and benefits for higher education. Students also will be able to gather information on financial-aid sources, such as grants, scholarships, federal work-study funds, and educational loans.

In Measuring Up 2000, a report card that grades states on their performance in higher education, Illinois ranked No. 1 among all states. Illinois received A's in the categories of preparation, participation, and affordability of a college education.

The FAAM web site--www.faam.org--launched a new look for 2001. The site has been designed to provide up-to-date, detailed information on each of the 52 FAFSA workshops, other FAAM activities on the calendar, and a wealth of information on topics related to college planning for students of all ages.

FAAM is a collaborative effort by the Illinois Association for College Admissions Counseling, the Illinois Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, and 20 lending institutions.

For more information about the FAAM workshops, call: Jo Branson, Carl Sandberg College, 309/341-5340; Julie Clark, Millikin University, 217/424-6343; or Barb Levin, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 847/831-8581.